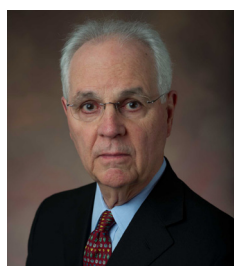




2010: Answering Critical Questions

2011 will bring clarity as we work through tough issues

Looking back on 2010, I am proud of the progress the Delta Stewardship Council has made toward developing the long-term management plan the Delta so sorely needs. We're faced with challenges and conflicts decades old, and we will be forced to make difficult decisions. Along the way I've been asked pointed questions from concerned Californians from across the state. Scanning my emails, I came up with this sampling of questions I answered in 2010.



PHIL ISENBERG,
CHAIR

Q. Do you think that the Jan. 1, 2012 deadline is realistic for the Delta Plan?

A. Realistic or not, it is the statutorily imposed deadline. The Council will keep our deadline, even if other agencies are unable to complete their own work on schedule.

Q. Not everyone will be happy with the Delta Plan. Your mission is to balance the coequal goals, but if you were only able to achieve one goal, which one is more important to you?

A. Your question is a good illustration of why water and Delta policy has been deadlocked for the last 50 years: the desire to pick a single winner, some interest or geographic region that is entitled to get as much water as it wants, whenever it wants, before everyone else in California (including the environment). That is a fair summary of the political battle that has been going on in this state and America since the 1950s. Passage of the legislative

See **Questions**, Page 5

SCOPING MEETINGS GIVE CALIFORNIANS A CHANCE TO WEIGH IN

Process will span the state

In less than a month, the Delta Stewardship Council will kick off a series of seven scoping meetings that will give agencies and individuals throughout the state an opportunity to weigh in on the future of this vital 738,000-acre estuary.

Scoping meetings are the latest step in a process that will conclude with a Delta Plan, the document that will guide all projects that could have an impact on the Delta – upstream, downstream and within the Delta itself. Over the coming months, the Delta Stewardship Council will use environmental studies, stakeholder perspectives and careful consideration to craft the Delta Plan.

By California law, the plan must further the state's coequal goals for the Delta of a reliable water supply and a restored ecosystem, while also recognizing the Delta as an evolving place. Also by law, the Delta Stewardship Council faces a tight deadline of Jan. 1, 2012 to complete the Delta Plan and an accompanying Environmental Impact Report (EIR), which must demonstrate that the Delta Plan meets all requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act. An EIR informs decision-makers and the public about the significant environmental effects of a project, possible ways to minimize those effects and reasonable alternatives to the project.

Between Jan. 18 and Jan. 26, 2011, the Council will host seven scoping meetings throughout California.

See **Scoping**, Page 3

please visit our website
deltacouncil.ca.gov

FINAL TWO WHITE PAPERS SUBMITTED TO COUNCIL

Documents Will Help Lend Context to Delta Plan

The Delta Stewardship Council has released the final two white papers that will help guide the creation of the Delta Plan. The documents address agriculture and water resources.

The Council has now issued six white papers. The earlier reports examined the Delta ecosystem, flood risk, emergency preparedness and land use. The Council was briefed on the final two white papers at its recent December meeting.

Delta as a Place: Agriculture White Paper

Delta agriculture is a significant contributor to the regional and state economies, but farming and other agricultural development over the past 100 years have changed the natural ecosystem in the Delta.

Consultants to the Council say balancing both will be an important part of the Delta Plan.

“Agriculture in general, and the importance of agriculture in the Delta, goes back to the beginning of California. It’s a vital part of the economy,” said Jeff Goldman, a consultant with AECOM Inc., an engineering firm that helped prepare the white paper. “[But] agriculture has changed the environment of the Delta.”

Agriculture is currently the main land use in the Delta, accounting for a little more than 531,000 acres as of 2008. According to the white paper, the exact contribution from the Delta to the state’s GDP is not known, but the value-per-acre contribution is greater than other agricultural regions in the state.

See White Papers, Page 4



AGRICULTURE IS CURRENTLY THE MAIN LAND USE IN THE DELTA. THE VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN THE DELTA HAS CONTINUED TO INCREASE AS FARMERS HAVE SWITCHED TO HIGHER VALUE CROPS.

*Courtesy of California
Department of Water Resources*

Member Spotlight

GRAY BRINGS FOCUS ON COLLABORATION TO COUNCIL

For Delta Stewardship Councilmember Gloria Gray, serving on the Council is about considering and applying a variety of viewpoints to restoring and strengthening the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. In more than three decades of public service, and more than 10 different board appointments, Gray is no stranger to solving problems through collaboration.



Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

*Delta Stewardship Councilmember
Gloria Gray*

“During my career, I have reached out and listened to others’ perspective in order to make informed decisions,” said Gray, who was appointed to the Council by former Speaker of the California State Assembly Karen Bass in February of this year. “I believe that is the most important aspect of collaborating with the Delta Stewardship Council members in crafting an equitable Delta Plan.”

Gray has served as a board member of the West Basin Municipal Water District since 2007. In that capacity, she and the Board have doubled water recycling and conservation programs, increased public education and added an ocean water desalination program to the Board’s portfolio. She also helped to implement “Water Reliability 2020,” a program to reduce dependence on imported water from 66 percent to 33 percent. Despite her involvement in the water world, she did not anticipate joining the Delta Stewardship Council.

“I was surprised and honored to be nominated by then-Speaker Karen Bass,” Gray said. “I was also excited about the opportunity to work with a professional group of individuals that bring diverse perspectives to the table for the development of a comprehensive Delta Plan.”

The Delta Stewardship Council, created by the Legislature in November 2009, is a state agency that has been charged with developing a Delta Plan – a comprehensive

See Gray, Page 4

COUNCIL LOOKS TO SCIENCE FOR APPROACH TO DELTA PLAN

Science was center stage at the Delta Stewardship Council's December meeting, as three lead scientists presented reports that will factor into the development of the forthcoming Delta Plan. As the plan takes shape, science – the latest and best available – will be crucial to provide context and direction.

"We spend all this time talking about process, every once in a while we should talk about some science," Council Chair Phil Isenberg said during the meeting.

The Council heard from lead DSC scientist Dr. Cliff Dahm, lead Interagency Ecology Program scientist Dr. Anke Mueller-Solger and Independent Science Board Chair Dr. Richard Norgaard.

"We spend all this time talking about process, every once in a while we should talk about some science."

Lead Scientist's Report

Dahm discussed three climate indices (weather patterns used to predict future hydrology) and explained the importance of each to the health of the Delta. The indices discussed were the El Niño (La Niña) Southern Oscillation (ENSO), the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) and the North Pacific Gyre Oscillation (NPGO).

Dahm mentioned that climate indices provide useful insights into precipitation patterns in the western U.S. and the dynamics of fish populations in San Francisco Bay and the California Delta.

"The reason I bring this up is that when we start to try to understand whether or not various kinds of restoration activities are having a positive effect in the Delta, we need to realize that some of the interannual variability is linked to some of these kind of climate indices and some of the conditions that exist out in the open ocean," Dahm said.

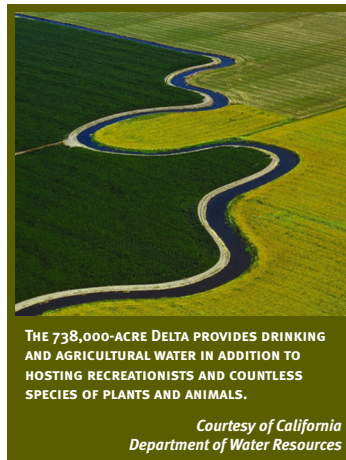
*See **Science**, Page 6*

Scoping, Continued from Page 1

The purpose behind the scoping process is to provide an opportunity for public and agency involvement in preparation of the Delta Plan EIR; help identify the scope of issues and potential impacts that must be discussed in an EIR to address the Plan's potential impacts; and help identify those "reasonable alternatives."

Engineer Gwen Buchholz, a consultant on the Delta Plan process, told Council members recently that the scoping process should be as broad as possible to ensure it errs on the side of inclusivity.

"My opinion is that we be more expansive initially in the scoping process," she said. "Then if the decision of the Council is to reduce that area, we would do it post-scoping process."



Information collected during the scoping process will be used to specifically define a wide range of implementation strategies for the Delta Plan, compare the strategies and compile them into alternatives that address all the goals and policy objectives of state law.

The scoping meetings will be led by Joe Grindstaff, executive officer of the Delta Stewardship Council, and Council members will attend each of the meetings.

In addition to comments received at the meetings, the Delta Stewardship Council is also inviting written comments to ensure that the full range of issues related to the development of the Delta Plan are identified. Council staff will put together a full report after the scoping process to compile all of the comments they receive.

Written comments are due by Jan. 28, 2011, and should be sent to:

Terry Macaulay

Deputy Executive Officer
Delta Stewardship Council
980 Ninth Street, Suite 1500
Sacramento, CA 95814

Comments can also be emailed to:

DELTAPLANSCOPING@DELTACOUNCIL.CA.GOV

Scoping Meeting Schedule

Next month, the Delta Stewardship Council will host seven meetings throughout California to give the public an opportunity to help shape the future of the vital estuary. More information can be found on the Council's website.

Jan. 18, 2011

6-8:30 p.m.
Diamond Bar

Jan. 24, 2011

6:30-9:30 p.m.
Clarksburg

Jan. 19, 2011

6-8:30 p.m.
Merced

Jan. 25, 2011

6-8:30 p.m.
Stockton

Jan. 20, 2011

6-8:30 p.m.
Concord

Jan. 26, 2011

6:30-9 p.m.
Chico

Jan. 24, 2011

9 a.m.-12 p.m.
Sacramento

Gray, Continued from Page 2

set of policies and regulations to guide future activities in the Delta, or anywhere in the state that either affects or benefits from the Delta. The 738,000-acre estuary supplies drinking water to about 25 million Californians and is home to 55 fish species, 750 plant species and other wildlife – some of which are endangered or threatened – supported by 1,000 miles of waterways and habitat some of which are endangered or threatened. It is also a vital source of water to California's multibillion-dollar agricultural industry.

The public process to determine these policies and regulations began in April of 2010 and must be completed by Jan. 1, 2012. Stakeholders and members of the public with an interest in the statutory coequal goals of water supply reliability for California, ecosystem health for the Delta and the Delta as an evolving place are encouraged to follow and contribute to the Council's process.

"I believe it is important we all work together to assist the Council in achieving the coequal goals," Gray said. "It has been extremely rewarding working with these individuals who have provided valuable information on regional perspectives as well as personal experiences in water supply management."

White Papers, Continued from Page 2

While no one disputes agriculture's economic power in the Delta, Council members want more accurate measurements for Delta planning purposes.

"Are there professionally recognized rules of calculating this number?" asked Council Chair Phil Isenberg. "I'd like to compare the same information and formulas. I'm interested in trends to see where we're heading."

"I strongly urge [the consultants] to study this situation on a crop-by-crop or commodity-by-commodity basis because it varies widely," added Council Member Randy Fiorini, who is also a farmer.

The Council also acknowledged the delicate balancing act between agricultural practices and ecosystems and how it can lead to conflict. Council Member Don Nottoli noted that sometimes water usage helps a particular species, but it may not be the best conservation policy.

In the development of the Delta Plan, the Council will also consider water rights for agricultural uses.

Water Resources White Paper

This white paper is intended to provide a summary of historical and existing conditions, and also provide context to water resource management on a statewide basis.

Groundwater overdraft is one of the most serious problems facing the state, according to staff.

"We use more [ground] water than we have as a natural supply," said Joe Grindstaff, executive officer for the Council. "It's a fact. There is much greater usage than we have supply. It's a significant problem moving forward."

Fiorini agreed, saying that overdrafting groundwater is the "real water crisis."

Better use of surface water to replenish groundwater supplies will be a critical component of the Delta Plan, but the Council admits that a variety of solutions are needed to confront the problem.

"Conservation is the first item of order," Fiorini said. "It's the easiest method to achieve adequate supplies."

There won't be any substantial edits to the white papers, but the content will be adjusted as it's folded into the environmental impact report.

All of the white papers are available [HERE](#).

Questions, Continued from Page 1

reform package in 2009 jumped past the old debate and set up a new paradigm: coequal values. That phrase is not, in my view, a declaration that every interest has to get whatever they want, but it elevates a “reliable water supply” and the “ecosystem” of the Delta to coequal status. We’ve spent 50 years waiting for one side or the other to win the political battle. Ultimately, water users and environmentalists blocked each other. During the last 50 years another thing has become clear: the American and California public and their federal, state and local governments have clearly indicated that protection of the environment is an important, arguably fundamental, goal of public policy.

The Council has a role in helping to define how the coequal goals work. Personally, I start from the fact that California has a relatively static supply of water, but the demands for more water appear to be endless. We do not do a good job of water conservation, although some water districts are a lot better than others. Obviously, any individual, business and water district in the state demands that the cost of water should be kept very low. Unless we change the way in which we use water, and unless we acknowledge that the imperfect system of water delivery we have today needs to improve and change as the Delta ecosystem is protected, little progress is possible.

Is it easy? No. Is doing the job possible? Yes.

Q. Now that Jerry Brown will be taking over as governor, are you foreseeing any deviations from the coequal goals?

A. The coequal goals are part of state law, not just the preference of members of the Delta Stewardship Council. If the law is to be changed, then the Legislature and governor will have to do it. I doubt that will happen anytime soon.

Q. There are doubts about the authority the Delta Stewardship Council has over water districts and other agencies. Are you concerned about this?

A. Why are you surprised that other government agencies who might have to comply with the Delta Plan resent that possibility? It’s in the nature of divided government. Yes, we had exactly that argument when adopting our rules of procedures for appeals/covered actions, etc. You can find our final rules and all communications from interested parties on our website under the Interim Plan.

Q. How do you think population growth will affect Delta resources in the future?

A. Urban development in and around the statutory Delta puts into jeopardy what remains of the Delta ecosystem. It also threatens an improved water conveyance system in or around the Delta. Intensive urban development in and around the Delta will inevitably terminate much of the agriculture that exists today. Finally, the Delta is an inherently flood-prone region of the state, and no increased level of flood protection will alter that basic fact.

Q. According to the legislation, the Bay Delta Conservation Plan must be a component of the Delta Plan. What happens if the BDCP doesn’t have a completed plan before the end of 2011?

A. It has been clear for some time that the BDCP process will not be completed until after (perhaps many months after) the Delta Stewardship Council’s Delta Plan is required to be adopted on or before Jan. 1, 2012. We intend to adopt a complete Delta Plan, and will examine what information exists from BDCP, which, in our view, meets the test of law and should be included in the Delta Plan. Of course, when BDCP is completed, the Council will comply with the provisions of Water Code Sec. 85320, etc. and a) hear any appeal from the Fish & Game determination of compliance with environmental law and b) if the appeal is denied by the Council, include BDCP in our Delta Plan, or c) request additional information if BDCP is incomplete.

Q. It seems like the BDCP is recommending a tunnel conveyance option for their plan. Do you also recommend that option as the best for California’s future water supply and restoring the ecosystem or something else?

A. We are asking ourselves exactly that same question. Stick around until January 2012 for our answer.

Q. How do you think population growth will affect Delta resources in the future?

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Science, Continued from Page 3

Dahm went on to explain that climate indices can assist ecosystem and water supply planning and management by providing some foresight into conditions up to a year in the future.

“Unless you factor that in to your analysis, you’re not going to get the best understanding of what activities centered around the Delta are having what effect,” Dahm said. “I think one of the things that [the study of climate indices] argues for is that you need long-term trends analysis. You can’t base your decisions on one good year or one bad year.”

The Interagency Ecological Program (IEP)

IEP lead scientist Dr. Anke Mueller-Solger recently completed a progress report on the unexpected decline of several open-water fishes (Delta smelt, longfin smelt, juvenile striped bass and threadfin shad) in the Delta. The emerging conclusion is that the decline was caused by multiple and often interacting stressors. There are a number of factors in the Delta impacting the population and survival of native fish species.

Often referred to as “stressors,” these include wastewater pollution, agricultural run-off, federal, state and local pumping diversions, competition from non-native fish and plant species, other pollutants, and temperature change and sea level rise due to the effects of climate change. How these stressors interact, and act independently, to impact fish species has been the center of intense study and debate over the past decade.

When the report turned to the complexity of ranking stressors, Isenberg made a plea for help.

“I’m looking for ways to approach the discussion [of ranking stressors]. There has to be a way to start rather than to have an endlessly complex array of things that have something to do with problems and no way to evaluate the range of them,” Isenberg said.

In response, Mueller-Solger explained, “What science can do for you is to present tradeoffs; what happens if I do this to the other part and what happens if I do that to this part.”

The Independent Science Board

Newly appointed Independent Science Board Chair Dr. Richard Norgaard agreed to commission a study to prioritize stressors in the Delta and to meet each month to review the science included in drafts of the Delta Plan.

Last month, the Independent Science Board was asked to prioritize the stressors in the Delta for the Council to consult during its drafting of the Delta Plan, noted by many as a difficult task.

“There is not a way to rank the stressors,” Norgaard said. “Our hope as an Independent Science Board is to provide you with a way of thinking about stressors that helps turn the battle away from ‘which stressor is more important’ into a constructive dialogue.”

The Independent Science Board will meet Jan. 12-13, 2011, to formulate a report about stressors. The group plans to present the report to the Council at the end of January.

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